

Meeting Notes

August 2, 2002

9:30 – 12:30

Attendance

Council Members:

Reg Clarke, Washington Association of Pupil Transportation
Glen Hallman, Consumer Representative
Michael Harbour, Washington State Transit Association
Andrew Johnsen, Governor's Office
Allan Jones, Alternate, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
Doreen Marchione, Hopelink, representing CTA-NW and the Washington
Association of Community Action Agencies
Doug Porter, Alternate, Department of Social and Health Services
Bernice Robinson, Consumer Representative

Legislative Members:

Senator Jim Horn	Representative Bill Fromhold
Senator Marilyn Rasmussen	Representative Fred Jarrett

Staff members:

Don Chartock, ACCT	Cathy Silins, WSDOT
Jim Erlandson, ACCT	Jim Slakey, WSDOT
Gordon Kirkemo, WSDOT	Brandy Tiller, WSDOT
Debra Mendoza, ACCT	Jeanne Ward, ACCT

Welcome and introductions

Michael Harbour welcomed everyone to the meeting. The council members and audience introduced themselves.

Recognition

Mike recognized Gordon Kirkemo for his nearly 30 years of contribution to the state. Gordon has worked on coordinating transportation since the early 80's and was instrumental in establishing ACCT. Gordon retires at the end of August.

Meeting notes from ACCT June 2002

The Council approved the June 2002 meeting notes.

Council Members Reports *Council*

Glen Hallman brought up the transportation summit, which was held in Whatcom County. As a result of that, a steering committee was put together to promote coordinated transportation. In July, the committee was accepted by the Council of Governments. This strong group of citizens and business people will hopefully be doing some work under ACCT.

Reg Clarke noted that the Washington Association of Pupil Transportation had its annual conference in June in Pasco. ACCT made a presentation. There was a large turn out and lots of learning took place.

Allan Jones talked about a conference that he attended. Joe Precourt, State director for Pupil Transportation in Alaska, made a presentation on coordinated transportation in Alaska, where they share facilities and vehicles between school districts and either city or county agencies.

Allan shared a concern. At the PACT meeting on July 17th staff shared pictures of a van purchased through a DOT grant. It was a 15-passenger van. These are considered non-conforming vans for transporting children, because they don't comply with federal motor vehicle safety standards. These vans have caught a lot of press attention lately, since they tend to roll over, especially when fully loaded. They are cargo vans with seats. The Governor has a requirement out that Head Start no longer use these vehicles. Allen suggested that the RCW on the school bus bid process could be changed to allow the purchase of buses by agencies other than school districts. That would allow access to school bus vehicles and would supply these at a significant cost savings. Allen recommends that all future grants require new non-transit vehicles to meet federal motor vehicles safety standards.

Jeanne asked if there was interest in putting together a work group to look at that issue. Allan said yes.

This issue also impacts coordination since agencies that use the 15 passenger vans can't transport children.

Tim Payne says the Pierce Transit fleet has over 1,000 on the road everyday and has not had problems. The drivers are trained in proper handling.

Mike asked staff to do some research and come back at another meeting with the information.

Mike talked about how the transit agencies are having to deal with the loss of the motor vehicle excess tax funds. Eleven systems have gone to the voters for tax increases to support transit and all have been successful. Three more are on the September ballot.

Senator Horn stated that transportation is in the public eye in many ways. Referendum 51, regional ballot measures, sound transit, and the monorail are issues that will be getting more public attention as the months go on.

Doreen Marchione stated that Hopelink and Harborview are now in Phase 1 of a project to speed up hospital releases and transportation home from the hospital. There were 60-80 transports daily in the first week of operation.

Pierce County Coalition Update *Tim Payne*

Tim Payne reported that the coalition has adopted a coordination plan. Two major tasks are underway:

1. Putting together a formal government structure, which will be an assemblage of government agencies with the primary focus and responsibility of coordinating transportation for people with special needs.
2. Conduct demonstration projects. A description of proposed demonstration projects were included in the meeting packet.

Another issue the coalition has worked on is insurance for special needs transportation. This has become a huge issue, since costs have sky rocketed. The committee spent time with the Washington State Transit Insurance Pool to get advice on developing an insurance pool for both for-profit and non-profit specialized transportation users.

Jeanne asked if Tim could explain a little more about what prevents insurance pooling. Is it a legislative issue? Tim answered, that there are two issues; one is critical mass, which means that there is not enough gross revenue to support an insurance pool. The second is state law. There are blockades in state law that keeps for-profit groups from joining or forming an insurance pool.

Tim also mentioned that Pierce Transit and Pierce County have an inner-governmental agreement that allows Pierce County, through JARC funds, to match dollar for dollar every dollar that ACCT has put into the Pierce County program, which to date is a little under \$75,000.

Final Grant Programs Application Process *Cathy Silins*

Cathy Silins talked about the work of the group that was put together by the department to develop criteria and procedures for the distribution of grants that are offered through the department. The application guidelines are final and available for distribution. They were widely distributed and are available on the web site. The due date for applications is October 16, 2002.

Legislative Session *Jeanne Ward*

Stretcher Van Bill

Don Chartock talked about the Stretcher Van Bill that Senator Gardner introduced last year with the support of Senator Rasmussen and Senator Horn among others. Last year it passed the Senate, but not the House. DSHS chaired a workgroup to come up with the language for the bill to be reintroduced this year. Representative Jarrett and Representative Fromhold offered to sponsor a bill on the House side. Senator Rasmussen offered to help on the Senate side. Glen made a motion of continued support and it was seconded. Motion passed.

Donation to Special Transportation Needs Bill

Mary Jo Cady, Executive Director of CTA-NW reported on preliminary discussion of a way to get money for ACCT projects. It is a program that would allow for voluntary contributions to fund coordination of special needs transportation. This would have no impact on the state budget, would not be subject to reversal by initiatives, could be easily endorsed by legislators on both sides, and would provide a source of funding for special needs transportation.

Senator Rasmussen asked about the cost of publicity for a good campaign. Mary Jo answered that since we are so electronically advanced that a lot of this could be done by e-mail. The cost would be minimal. Senator Rasmussen volunteered her time to help with the campaign.

State Role in Special Needs Transportation Bill

Don Chartock reported that this bill has been introduced the last two legislative sessions. It adds an introductory clause to the ACCT statute, to say the legislature recognizes that the state has a responsibility to address the transportation needs of persons with special transportation needs. Last year the bill passed Senate without opposition, but not the House. The plan is to introduce it again this year.

Communications Status Report *Stan Suchan*

ACCT Stories and the Media

Stan Suchan introduced Tonia Buell, Communication Manager in the Public Transportation Office, Stan stated that he will work with the Council through the end of the year to produce the bi-annual report to the legislature. Tonia will become the main communication support person for ACCT.

Stan and the communications team conducted media relations training with the ACCT community coordinators. The best spokesmen are those who are on the front lines doing the work. They are most effective in speaking to legislators, local officials, and the media. They have powerful stories to tell about how coordination works, and that makes the coordination story tangible to people.

December 2002 Report to the Legislature

Stan talked about the report that is due to the legislature. Stan asked everyone to look over the proposed outline and give comments back to Jeanne. This report should articulate, once again, the coordinated transportation vision. New members of the legislature will be unfamiliar with the concept. The report will also document our progress in achieving the vision. It will also ask the legislature for support. These are some tough goals to achieve in one document, but it can be done. The last two reports that we prepared are strong and Stan will build on them.

Chelan/Douglas/Okanogan Coalition Report *Greg Wright*

Jim Erlandson introduced Greg Wright from LINK Transit. Greg provided a brief overview of where things have been going over the last six months. Okanogan County, to the north, was not a part of the coalition. It is the largest county in the state; very rural. It has an established PTBA, but no dedicated funding source. Jeanne, Greg, and Tom Green met with the full Okanogan County Commission on June 10, 2002 and invited them to join the coalition. The Commissioners agreed to it and passed a motion to join the Chelan/Douglas Coalition.

In February of this year the coalition held a series of public meetings in the Chelan/Douglas area to identify gaps. An area in Northern Douglas County in the town of Mansfield lies in a very isolated pocket. There is subsidized housing in the area and DSHS places people there who have no transportation. LINK Transit, the public transportation provider for Chelan/Douglas Counties, goes as far as Waterville. It is another 30 miles to Mansfield. On August 21, 2002 the Mansfield Project will be kicked off. Trancare has a dedicated vehicle up in the area one day a week. They will take people from Mansfield to Waterville. At this point people will transfer onto LINK Transit and make the trip to Wenatchee.

A call center is also being established with TranCare, the Medicaid broker, which will be a base to build on for future projects. It will encourage other agencies to look at what they can do to coordinate call centers for transportation in the area.

Work Plan Status Reports

Overview

Don Chartock reviewed the work plan status report. The council expressed a desire to see the report formatted in terms of accomplishments and outcomes, not outputs. Staff will make changes.

Workfirst Transportation Initiative

Janet Abbet, OTED WorkFirst Program, talked about the current and future WTI projects. OTED just compiled the first report to FTA since the grant funds were received. At this point 10 of 16 projects have begun providing transportation services and another one started in July. The other five hope to have services started before the next report is due. As of June 30, 2002 over 47,000 trips have been provided and about 30,000 of those are people who are eligible for TANF. An application to the FTA was submitted for over 6 million dollars to continue existing projects, and for just fewer than 6 million dollars for new projects. The WTI received a \$6 million federal earmark for 2002 and hopes for another \$6 million for 2003.

School/Community Coordination

Jeanne Ward reported that a manual on school/community coordination is out for review. It is not in final form but will be soon.

Gordon Kirkemo informed the council of a project in Skamania County. Agencies that provide transportation operate out of their own program silos. Coordination efforts are spent trying to build crosswalks between the silos. Gordon questioned if we could build a coordinated system from the ground up, rather than try to coordinate many existing systems. Skamania County wants to look at the prospect of developing a public transportation system. The project is to investigate the feasibility of a public transportation system that includes school districts. The RFP process is being used to select a consultant to do this feasibility study.

Volunteer Driver

Barb Savary with the Public Transportation Office presented an update on the Volunteer Driver Workgroup. The group is now finalizing a best practices guide to assist organizations with understanding specific requirements to develop a volunteer driver program.

Defining Transportation Costs

Don Chartock talked about ACCT's requirement to help agencies track and report transportation costs. The first step is to define a transportation cost. ACCT has been working on this issue in the PACT Forum and started with specific language to define a transportation cost. The discussion got hung up on the issue of reporting direct and indirect cost. It was decided to track indirect costs. Then the definition of indirect costs became an issue. OFM suggested creating a base line

to compare against. Each agency should define what its indirect costs are. Once they decide, changes can be tracked as time goes on.

Budget Update

Jeanne Ward referenced two documents in the packet. One was the ACCT expenditure report. We are exactly where we should be. The second thing was a draft letter from the council to the Transportation Commission protesting potential cuts to the ACCT budget. The council reviewed and approved the letter.

Andrew Johnsen from the Governor's Office talked about the budget. By the next meeting a threshold of several key discussion points will have been crossed in the budget development process. The Governor's Office and OFM offices are engaged in the early process of assessing some of the implications on the current budget as well as the future biennium. As information continues to be assembled and assessed, it's no surprise that the challenges before us are even greater than last year

Audience Comments

LeAnne Leifer of Okanogan County Senior Citizens, an organization that provides transportation in Okanogan County, said that while coordination is necessary to obtain grants, it is also difficult. She is in a very rural county, providing the only transportation in the county. They have 1 ½ administrative staff to provide these services. Much of the coordination that is needed to obtain grants involves travel in order to work with partners. They don't have the time or money in the budget to accommodate the travel.

Cathy Silins said the ACCT Council would be contacted regarding people to serve on the grant evaluation panel. Cathy would like to get the reviewers together before the applications come through the door to show them the tools for evaluating applications. Two panels will be formed. The council can be on one or both of the panels. Jeanne commented that PACT Forum members could be asked to volunteer for this since they serve as an advisory panel to the council.

Meeting adjourned

Decisions by the Council

The Council approved the June 2002 meeting notes.

The Council passed the motion to continue support of the stretcher van bill.

The Council passed the motion to continue support of the bill on State responsibility for special needs transportation.

The Council approved a letter to the Transportation Committee protesting proposed ACCT budget cuts.

Next regular meeting

Friday, October 4, 2002
9:30–12:30

DOT Commission Board Room (1D22)
310 Maple Park Avenue, SE
Olympia, Washington 98504-7387

For questions regarding grant administration, policy and activities, contact Jeanne Ward, ACCT Administrator, at 360-705-7917 or wardje@wsdot.wa.gov. For information on meetings, agendas, materials, and clerical issues, contact Debra Mendoza, ACCT Secretary, at 360-705-7922 or Mendozd@wsdot.wa.gov.